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EXAMPLES OF THOMAS SULLY'S
WORK

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees held November 9th, the bequest of the late Francis Thomas Sully Darley, of Philadelphia, was accepted. This bequest, of peculiar value, consists of five pictures by Thomas Sully, the grandfather of the donor, and one painting attributed to Van Dyck, all exhibited temporarily in the Room of Recent Accessions. The Sullys, a study of Queen Victoria from life and portraits of members of his immediate family, have from their intimate personal character passed directly from the artist himself to the hands of his descendants. Besides the head of Victoria, the bequest includes a beautiful portrait of Mrs. Sully; a portrait of Rosalie, one of the painter's daughters, as an art student; a group of Mrs. Jane Darley and her son Francis (who is none other than the donor of these pictures); and a painting showing a baby asleep, who appears to be the same child at an early age.

In addition to his descent from Sully, Mr. Darley had another connection with the history of American art in that his father's brother was Felix O. C. Darley, the illustrator, five of whose drawings, the gift of W. A. White, have been received lately and are exhibited simultaneously with the Sullys bequeathed by Mrs. Darley.

The life of Thomas Sully is recounted in Dunlap's delightful chronicle, *The History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*. The painter was born in England in 1783, the son of Matthew and Sarah Chester Sully, both actors, who came to this country with their children in 1792, settling in Charleston, South Carolina, where Thomas went to school and later entered an insurance office. Having no vocation for the insurance business, he was apprenticed to his brother-in-law, M. Belzons, a French gentleman who painted miniatures. Quarreling with M. Belzons, who seems to have had a quick temper, Thomas left this position and joined his brother Lawrence, who was also a miniature painter, in Richmond, Virginia. Lawrence Sully died in 1803, leaving his

widow and four young daughters unprovided for. Their care was assumed by Thomas. It was evidently no unpleasant task, as in 1805 he and Mrs. Sully were married. Her maiden name was Sarah Annis. She was thirteen years his senior; the charm of her personality may be divined from her portrait painted twenty-seven years later, showing her still beautiful at the age of sixty-two.

Thomas Sully had already given up his miniatures for the practice of oil painting, and was well launched in portraiture when soon after his marriage he moved to New York, where he emulated the style of Trumbull. After various voyages he settled in 1808 in Philadelphia, at that time the capital of the United States. A year and a half later he went to England, where he studied under the direction of Benjamin West. After a year's training under this artist, he returned to Philadelphia, soon winning the position of its most prominent portrait painter. He lived in that city until the end of his life except for travels to various parts of this country and two visits to England, one in 1809-10, the other in 1837-38. His death took place in 1872 in the ninetieth year of his age and he worked almost to the last.

Sully, like Sir Joshua Reynolds, kept a diary or Register, as he called it, of his work, entering the names of his sitters, and the dates of beginning and ending of his pictures, together with the valuations which he placed on them. The first entry is "May 10, 1801. Began miniature of Chester Sully [the artist's brother] in Norfolk, Virginia, being my first attempt from life, for Mary Lee." His last entry is "January 26, 1872. Copy of Michael Angelo's from a print." Between these dates he recorded 2,520 pictures the valuation of which amounted to \$246,744.

At the death of the painter this interesting document passed into the possession of his daughter Blanche Sully and is now preserved in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. It has been published in a rearranged form, grouped alphabetically according to the sitters' names by Charles Henry Hart, who has added an introduction and valuable notes. It is by means of this

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ORIGINAL STUDY OF QUEEN VICTORIA
BY THOMAS SULLY



MOTHER AND SON
BY THOMAS SULLY

edition that our pictures have been identified with the artist's entries, with the exception of one work, *The Rosebud*, the portrait, probably, of Francis Darley as a baby, referred to above, which is seemingly not mentioned in it.

Descriptions of the pictures follow.

Original Study of Queen Victoria. During the artist's lifetime this picture hung on the walls of the painting room in his house on Fifth Street between Chestnut and Market Streets in Philadelphia. It was the first portrait of the Queen after her coronation and is inscribed: T S London May 15 1838 My original study of the queen of England Victoria 1st Painted from life Buckingham House.

The head vignettied on the bare canvas is the only part finished. She wears a diamond crown, diamond earrings and necklace, and below are sketches in detail of jewels and ornaments which were utilized in the replicas made from the study. These replicas are six in number, one half-length engraved by Wagstaff, which is in the Wallace Collection in London and two whole-lengths, one painted in 1839, owned by the St. George's Society, Philadelphia, another, painted in 1838, which was given to the St. Andrew's Society of Charleston, South Carolina, and three others mentioned in the Register but the whereabouts of which are not known. Our work is number 1,749 in Hart's edition of the Register.

The Portrait of the Artist's Wife. She was born in 1770 in Annapolis and died in 1867 in Philadelphia. As has been told above, she first married Lawrence Sully. After his death she became the wife of Thomas Sully in 1805. The picture is signed with the usual cipher, T and S joined together, and dated 1832. The picture is one of Sully's marked successes. The head is very attractive and the handling most brilliant, reminding one in this direction of the work of John Sargent. This painting is number 1,931 in Hart's arrangement of the Register.

Mother and Son. The lady is the

painter's daughter Jane Sully Darley, the wife of William H. W. Darley, the brother of F. O. C. Darley, the illustrator. The child is Francis Thomas Sully Darley, her son, the one who has bequeathed the pictures to us. The work was painted in 1840 and is signed T. S. It is number 409 in the Register. Mrs. Darley, seated in profile, leans her elbow on a low stone wall by the seashore and supports her chin in her hand. She is an attractive lady with curls hanging over her cheek and wears a purplish bodice and white silk skirt and white shoes. The boy who leans against her has a green frock open at the neck, long brownish trousers, and red shoes. A spaniel is at his feet. There is a very pretty bit of landscape—a beach with breaking waves rather low on the canvas, leaving a wide stretch of sky for the chief part of the background.

The Artist's Daughter Rosalie Sully, also called *The Fair Student.* The picture is number 1,631 in the Register. It represents a young girl resting her crossed hands on a portfolio and looking out from beneath a large eye shade which casts a shadow over her eyes. She has long curls hanging over her shoulders.

A Sleeping Child. This work has been engraved, with the title of *The Rosebud.* The baby is lying in his crib half covered with a yellow coverlet. A red curtain forms the background. A half-opened rose lying on the pillow beside the baby's head gives the obvious excuse for the title of the engraving. There is the usual cipher signature and the date 1841.

In addition to these five valuable Sullys,¹ Mr. Darley's bequest comprises an autograph of Queen Victoria, which was given to Sully at the time of the painting of her portrait, and a Portrait of a Cavalier attributed to Van Dyck—a picture which was bought by Rembrandt Peale in Paris in 1807 and passed into the possession of Thomas Sully by exchange. B. B.

¹With the accession of these pictures the Museum now owns ten examples of Sully's work.



PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST'S WIFE
BY THOMAS SULLY